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Longtime analyst in Casey's job

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WASHINGTON — Robert M. Gates, the man who will run the CIA during William J. Casey's absence, has served as a government intelligence analyst and adviser since 1969.

Gates, 43, has been deputy director since March, when President Reagan nominated him to the position. Gates has been in charge of the agency since Casey was hospitalized after suffering two seizures Monday, according to agency spokeswoman Kathy Pherson.

Gates has been a witness before at least one congressional committee probing the Iran-contra affair, according to congressional sources. Those sources have said that Gates testified to the House Intelligence Committee that Marine Lt. Col. Oliver L. North, the fired National Security Council aide, discussed a link between the contras and the Iranian arms sales during a lunch with Casey and other CIA officials Oct. 8 or 9.

Gates' testimony has raised questions about whether Casey accurately recounted the extent and timing of his knowledge of the diversion of arms-sale proceeds to the contras, when he testified on Capitol Hill earlier this month.

A native of Wichita, Kan., Gates entered the agency's career training program in 1966 and became an intelligence analyst in 1969. He served on the National Security Council staff from 1974-1976 and was an adviser to President Jimmy Carter from 1977 to 1979, when he returned to the CIA as director of the agency's Strategic Evaluation Center.

Gates was among a small group of top administration officials that last March presented to Reagan what became the final U.S. position toward Ferdinand E. Marcos, the Philippine leader who left his country after being defeated by Corazon C. Aquino.

Gates also has publicly defended the CIA's expansion of employment-contract relationships with American university professors and business officials — a policy that has drawn fire from critics who maintain the CIA is forbidden by law from any domestic activities.

In an interview in January, Gates, who has graduate degrees from Georgetown University and Indiana University and a bachelor's degree from the College of William and Mary, said that some academics were more perceptive of the shifting events in Iran during the late 1970s than were the CIA's analysts.

"There were scholars out there saying the shah was in trouble, and somehow that never got into any official assessment," Gates said. "What we are after is people who will challenge us constructively, offer us a different perspective, who will stir up the pot a bit and who will help us consider all points of view, including the unorthodox."

Gates added, in an opinion column published in the Washington Post on Dec. 12, 1984:

"Despite imperfections, CIA and the intelligence community produce the best, most comprehensive and most objective intelligence reporting in the world. We are working every day to make it better, and however surprising it may be to our critics, we believe they contribute to this process, and so we listen to them."